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**Maynard James Keenan:
Lyrics of Evolution; Evolution of Lyrics**
Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

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*I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.*

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Introduction

Maynard James Keenan is the singer known from the bands Tool and A Perfect Circle as well as from his recent side project Puscifer. Beginning in 1990, Tool have become highly influential for several music movements, produced multi-platinum selling records topping the charts in several countries, and won three Grammy Awards, yet due to their intense and multi-layered music, they have remained an alternative act; A Perfect Circle met with similar response. Unlike most of music bands, Tool are a democratic group in the sense that no “spokesman” for the band exists and A Perfect Circle was started by its guitarist Billy Howerdell; however, Keenan’s lyrics are important, for they provide a context for the music. He approaches many issues in his songs, such as personal feelings, manipulation, social criticism, hypocrisy, religion or censorship. Nevertheless, there is one theme underlying his lyrics: evolution.

In my thesis, I will discuss the theme of evolution appearing in Maynard James Keenan’s lyrics. While this theme may not be unique in contemporary lyrics, Keenan addresses it from a different, matchless perspective in effort to broaden horizons of his listeners. The thesis will also show that while Keenan’s lyrics are often considered dark, they are, in fact, positive and optimistic.

The work is divided into three parts. The first part deals with Keenan’s life as well as his work. This part will portray Keenan’s biographical background, which is important for his lyrics, as well as point out his current cultural status. The second chapter discusses Keenan’s evolution lyrics. I have divided Keenan’s evolution lyrics into three different categories. And the last chapter of the thesis deals with Keenan’s religious music, which form substantial segment of his work. Although often perceived as opposed to faith, the thesis will show that the singer is only critical of some tendencies of organized religion.

1. Maynard James Keenan's Life and Works

1.1 Background

Maynard James Keenan, born James Herbert Keenan, was born in Ravenna, Ohio to a Baptist family (Mahaffey), which had large impact on his future career (Wilding). During his youth he moved very often, living in Ohio, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas (Mahaffey). In 1982 he entered the army, attending the United States Military Academy Preparatory School's class of 1984 ("Tool – the Band"). Along being a member of the wrestling and cross country teams, he also joined the Glee Club¹ and the Knight Crier². Keenan claims that his army experience taught him "a lot about the lowest common denominator for human behavior when trapped in closed quarters" (Schalin). "You'd think that integration would end up breaking down barriers," Keenan continues, "but all it does is strengthen them." Although receiving an appointment to the United States Military Academy (Akhtar, 2), he chose to study art at Kendall College of Art and Design in Michigan, one of the best in that area (Schalin). In fact, the Army College Fund allowed Keenan to go to art school (Keenan and Patton). His studies led to a work in L.A. where he applied Feng Shui spatial design concepts to pet stores (Mahaffey), after that he worked in set design for the film industry. He was a member of several bands during 1980s: he played the bass guitar in the band TexA.N.S. (Tex & the Anti Nazi Squad) and then he formed Children of the Anachronistic Dynasty.

Tool was formed in the year 1990. Keenan, while collaborating with comedy heavy metal band Green Jelly (Keenan made an cameo appearance on their 1992 song "Three Little Pigs"), met guitarist Adam Jones, a graduate of the Hollywood Makeup Academy. Jones worked as a sculptor and special effects designer on films such as Jurassic Park, Terminator 2:

¹ West Point Prep's official choral music ambassadors.

² West Point Prep's school newspaper.

Judgment Day, or Ghostbusters 2, and was at that time helping with Green Jelly's costume design (Mahaffey). During his work in the film industry Jones met future Tool bassist Paul D'Amour, originally from Spokane, Washington. Danny Carey, session drummer for Green Jelly, Pygmy Love Circus, and Carole King, met Keenan when they moved into the same Los Angeles apartment complex in the late 1980s and they immediately became friends. As Carey recalls:

We spent most of the time trying to keep the bums from defecating on our front steps. We'd communicate by yelling across the parking lot. He'd scream at me from his window in that amazing Maynard scream. I told him "Man, you should sing in a band." (Dolan)

Carey, although never auditioning for them, soon joined the band, the reason being he felt sorry for them because the musicians invited for a rehearsal did not come (Mahaffey).

The year 1992 became one of the most important in modern music history. In January, Nirvana's album *Nevermind* symbolically knocked Michael Jackson's *Dangerous* off the top of the American album chart Billboard 200 (Erlewine). Grunge sound thus moved from its local roots to national and subsequently international success, in effect becoming a global popular culture (Howitt). However, Nirvana's success did not only establish grunge as a music genre, but also the cultural and commercial viability of alternative rock in general (Olsen). Apart from other grunge bands, most notably Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains and Soundgarden, other alternative rock/metal bands started to proliferate. It must be noted that there was no real "scene," just an increased willingness to experiment with a music form that had grown overly reliant on pure instrumental technique ("Alternative Metal"). Thus among the bands that emerged from underground music scene to sudden success were such diverse acts as the funk influenced Primus, rap rock Rage Against the Machine, or Smashing Pumpkins (Erlewine). All of them were musically very different, but had one in common: their albums reached platinum status.

However, it was also the time of increasing turmoil among the youth throughout Western world. Young people in the USA were affected by over a decade of conservative Republican administrations in the States, while their British counterparts suffered from social policies of Margaret Thatcher; the same was happening in Australia under the Hawke government (Howitt). Nirvana's first hit single "Smells Like Teen Spirit" reflects this era. Its lines "Here we are / Entertain us" are generally perceived as a portrayal of the frustration, which was predominant in the youth culture at that time (Erlevine). Kurt Cobain, Nirvana's frontman, wrote lyrics that were honest (Howitt) and his natural behavior was the complete opposite to the "Axl Rose machismo," as Howitt explains. In other words, this honesty and sincerity was very different from the label-friendly style of the so-called hair metal music, which was more focused on image and presentation than on music itself. Moreover, there was never such a strong connection between a band and its audience before Nirvana ("Interview with Tool"). Due to Nirvana's authenticity, many could easily identify with Kurt Cobain, and subsequently with other emerging musicians from the underground.

Music themes prevailing at that time were diverse. The leftist-oriented band Rage Against the Machine explored various political themes and their heavily driven song "Killing in the Name" with the line "Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me" became a symbol for everything from teenage tantrum to ultimate revolution (Robinson). Nine Inch Nails' "Wish" from the album *Broken* illustrated the era's disillusionment: "I put my faith in God and my trust in you / Now there's nothing more fucked up I could do," the chorus being "Wish there was something real, wish there was something true." And the rasped lyrical visions of a corrupt America, drug addiction, mindless patriotism, and religious hypocrisy of Ministry frontman Alain Jourgensen were not per se revelatory, but anyone living during the Bush administration might find plenty to sympathize with (Raggett). Thus the life of a heroin addict was explored in "Just One Fix," and a critique of then President George H. W. Bush

manifested in “N.W.O.,” a song notable for containing a sample of Bush repeating “a new world order.”

After only three months of rehearsing and a handful of shows, Tool settled on a record deal with Zoo Entertainment, one of the first labels to approach them with a contract (Turman). This early signing to a major-label is impressive, although “Seattle hysteria” (Darzin) – talent scouts searching for the next Nirvana – partly explains Tool’s fast start; however, it is still uncommon considering the fact that Tool had no album recorded. As Phil Wilding from the magazine *Rock Power* points out, Tool is “just another band from Los Angeles,” other bands being for example Rage Against the Machine or Red Hot Chili Peppers. Scott Schalin also further details the music scene at the beginning of the 90s, explaining that there were many bands – Helmet, Paw, Tar, etc. – whose similar styles as well as one-word names have spawned a genre that *LA Times*’ Jonathon Gold called “noun rock” (qtd. in Schalin). Keenan humorously replied that “Tool is a verb, not a noun” (Garza, 1). The contract with Zoo Records, although signed for less money than another interested label offered, ensured the band complete artistic freedom over all their products – music, album cover, t-shirts or videos (Jenison). Not only that this was at that time unusual, but it also proved to be a vital part in Tool’s success. During 1991, Tool tours opening for the Rollins Band, Rage Against the Machine and Fishbone, gaining popularity with every concert (Sokal).

Their first record, EP *Opiate*, was released in 1992 and described as “standing out like a glowing red lump of coal in a bin of man-made diamonds – raw, real and honest” (Garza, 1). And honesty and sincerity are the factors that, the band claims, have lead them to their fast debut as well as differentiating them from other Los Angeles bands (Wilding). *Opiate* was named after Karl Marx’s quote “Religion is the opium of the masses” (diCarlo) and was represented by the band’s first music video, “Hush.” The black-and-white video, which was

devised by Keenan (Jenison), depicts the band members still and nude in a white room, with their mouths sealed by duct tape and signs covering their sexual organs and backsides saying “Parental Advisory: Explicit Parts,” parodying the “Parental Advisory: Explicit Content” sticker. The “Hush” video is also notable for the fact that it is the only Tool video to display members of the band.

Undertow, the first full-length record by the band, was released in 1993 and described in the following way: “Consider if Black Sabbath had been formed by literate art students rather than a bunch of British working-class blues growlers” (Pettigrew). The band’s video for “Sober” was directed – as every following Tool video – by the band’s guitarist Adam Jones and won in Billboard’s “Best Video by a New Artist” (“Tool Guitarist”). And although Wal-Mart and Kmart department stores refused to carry the album, which led the band to release a censored cover of the album (Griffin), and the next video also stirred controversy, the band received praise from both critics and fans (Pettigrew). Moreover, the *Undertow* era also marked the cooperation between Keenan and the stand-up comedian Bill Hicks³. Keenan, who befriended Hicks (True, 279), was significantly influenced by the comedian’s work; Hicks’ influence will be discussed later in the thesis. In September 1995, the band entered the studio to record their following album, *Ænima*. This era also marks the only change in the band’s lineup to date: bassist D’Amour, who left the band to start his own project, was replaced by Justin Chancellor, a member of the band Peach.

Ænima was produced by David Bottrill, who worked with King Crimson and Peter Gabriel, and is 77 minutes long. Described as “hard rock record for the thinking man” (Akin) as well as an “album that must be heard in exhausting sequence from start to finish” (Genovese), Tool were characterized as “the most uncompromising band in America” which has “stormed” the US charts (“Harvest”). The record is dedicated to Bill Hicks, who died of

³ Hicks introduced the band at the Lollapalooza festival in Los Angeles, yelling “Hey, I think I lost my contact lens in the mosh pit!” See True pp. 247.

pancreatic cancer, by featuring a painting of Hicks with the caption “Another Dead Hero.” While encountering commercial success, the band refused to do commercial radio edits of their songs and turned down “high-profile opportunities like soundtrack offers and appearances on Saturday Night Live” (Pettigrew). Interestingly, the band was criticized for not writing three minute songs (Rev. of *Ænima*, *MTV Online*), for most of their songs have an average length of six to eight minutes. In spite of another controversy with the first single of the album, “Stinkfist,” the album won the Grammy Award in the category Best Metal Performance (“40th Grammy Awards”) for the song “Ænema” and is the band’s top-selling album up to date: according to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), it is currently certified as triple platinum (“Tool Gold and Platinum”).

In late 1997, Tool and their record company lead a lengthy legal suit, which lasted over a year and caused the band to stop writing new material (Akhtar, 2). While Tool’s activity was slacken by the legal issues, Keenan offered himself as lead singer for the band A Perfect Circle, formed by Billy Howerdel, a former Nine Inch Nails, Tool or David Bowie guitar tech. The band’s lineup was described as “rather spectacular” (“Interview with Maynard Keenan”): apart from Howerdell and Keenan, the changing lineup consisted of such artists as Primus drummer Tim Alexander, experienced studio drummer Josh Freese, Nine Inch Nails guitarist Danny Lohner, James Iha, guitarist of Smashing Pumpkins, or Joerdie White, originally Marilyn Manson and later Nine Inch Nails bassist. The band, often mistakenly referred to as Keenan’s side project, was described as “a force to be reckoned with on the music scene” as well as “standing above the crowd with truly original work” (Otts). The band, which is on hiatus since 2006, released three studio albums and one DVD and CD collection; out of these four releases, three are certified platinum (“A Perfect Circle Gold and Platinum”).

Overcoming the legal issues with their label, Tool released *Salival*, a limited box set collection of live and unreleased material in 2000. Year later, third full-length studio Tool album, *Lateralus*, was released on May 15, 2001, debuting at number one on the Billboard 200 chart. Described as the “comeback of the year” (Winwood) and as “one of the greatest albums you’ll ever hear this lifetime” (Everley), the record not only lead to Tool being compared to Radiohead, but also positioned Keenan as one of the most influential artists for the year 2001 (Blashill). The single “Schism” also spawned another Grammy Award for Best Metal Performance for the band. However, Tool has still remained unconventional: the second music video of the album, which is comprised of the songs “Parabol” and “Parabola,” lasts over ten minutes. And the latest Tool release, *10,000 Days*, was also critically and commercially well received, debuting again at number one on the Billboard 200 chart. In addition, Adam Jones received the Grammy Award for Best Recording Package for his work on the package of the album⁴. Today, Tool, while avoiding music industry conventions, is considered as one of the world’s most commercially and uniquely successful bands (“Metal Band Tool”). And the band’s original stage presentation, during which the band members stay in shadows while several large projection screens dominate the performance, definitely contributed to the acclaim.

Most recently, Keenan started his solo project Puscifer, which is not only a music that “makes you feel good” but also a clothing line (Epstein, 1). Moreover, Keenan has began to make wine in his current residence in Arizona, owing Merkin Vineyards and Caduceus Cellars; while the winery is named after ancient Greek symbol of healing⁵, the vineyard is named after a pubic wig (Burgees). The singer is also known for his protection of privacy and dislike for traditional “rock star” manners (Buck), the former being apparent from his concert

⁴ The album has elaborate cover with a pair of stereoscopic eyeglasses, which can be used to view images inside the cover, resulting in three-dimensional perception of the artwork.

⁵ See <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9018504/caduceus>>

appearance: during a Tool concert he often wears tights, dresses and even bras; in A Perfect Circle appearance he dons long wigs. As Keenan explains, all that started when his son was born: “That’s the main reason for the makeup, the wigs, the bras [...]. I just like the incognito aspect [...]. I just think it’s really unfair for my child to have to be victimized by my career” (Loder). Moreover, in live performances with Tool, Keenan is standing on a platform in front of a projection screen towards the rear of the stage without a spotlight pointing at him. However, the singer has made several appearances on benefit concerts, most notably performing the song “Muhammad My Friend” with Tori Amos at a 1997 benefit concert for RAINN (the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)⁶. Keenan has also appeared in film: he is featured in several segments of *Mr. Show* sketch comedy series and his portrayal of Charles Manson on the show was described by critics as “so intense and too real to not be upsetting” (“Interview with Maynard Keenan”); other roles played by Keenan are Satan in the *Bikini Bandits* parody series or Deputy Lance in the independent film *Sleeping Dogs Lie*⁷. Keenan was also involved in Tapeworm, an unhatched supergroup that consisted of such prominent artists as Page Hamilton, Charlie Clouser, Phil Anselmo or Nine Inch Nails mainman, Trent Reznor.

Keenan’s cultural impact is apparent by the fact that his⁸ and Tool⁹ entries are featured articles – that is articles considered to be the best – in Wikipedia. The internet encyclopedia contained 2,345,578 articles on 24 Apr.; out of these, only 2,020 were featured. Moreover, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum placed *Lateralus* as number 123 on their “Definitive 200,” a list of “history’s most influential and popular albums” (“Definitive 200”).

⁶ The sold-out performance at the Madison Square Garden, during which Amos called Keenan her “dearest friend,” can be seen on Amos’ *Live from New York*. See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SxHJBMrVhI>>

⁷ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DS57_TAC-gE>.

⁸ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maynard_James_Keenan>.

⁹ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tool_%28band%29>.

Thus Tool surpassed such albums by mainstream artists like John Lennon's *Imagine* or Madonna's *Like a Virgin*.

1.2 Note

Before the discussion of Keenan's lyrics begins, an important notice must be made. Not only Keenan does not print lyrics into the record sleeve, but he also only rarely comments on the meaning of his songs. As Keenan puts it, "Don't go for the meaning, go for the feeling!" (Eliezer). Moreover, he does not think it is important that the listeners understand the intended meaning of the songs, for he prefers to "inspire people to wake up one day and pick up a book and start feeling it for themselves" (Drew). In other words, an analysis of his lyrics could cover wide area without even arriving at an acceptable conclusion. Instead of basing my reading of the singer's lyrics on my own interpretation, I have used the singer's rare comments on the songs as a basis for my thesis. In other words, while my conclusions can be still different from Keenan's intended message of the song, they are based on the singer's own comments, thus providing a good start for my analysis. It must be also noted, that only few Puscifer songs will be discussed, for they are different from the singer's other work. As Keenan puts it:

[Puscifer] has got good groove. It makes you feel good and that's where I've been concentrating because I have all the introspective, torturous, painfully organized and arranged music that takes years to create and cuts really deep. But Puscifer does not do that. (Epstein, 1)

I have classified Keenan's lyrics into two categories, the first category deals with evolution, whether on personal or on broader level and is the main part of the thesis. It will show that while the singer's lyrics are often considered as dark (Fricke), the opposite is true. The second part deals with religion and spirituality. I will first deal with the lyrics belonging to evolutionary lyrics category. These are further divided into three parts.

2 Evolution lyrics

The first Tool record, *Opiate*, contains one of the band's angriest songs (Akhtar, 2). However, the emotions are not fabricated in any way, for the frustration and anger are certainly understandable. Not only did Carey and Keenan live in a poor neighborhood – Carey heard gunshots every night at that time (Trimpop) – but the other band members encountered difficulties as well. Former Tool bass player Paul D'Amour describes his Spokane home as “the setting for America's Most Wanted” (Darzin). And Jones also reveals his experiences of the era:

I lived down on Normandie – a street hit hard by the L.A. riots – and you'd hear gunfire every night. I was trying to get into school, get a job, thinking “L.A. sucks.” My motorcycle was hit twice while it was parked. All this bad stuff was happening. (Darzin)

Adding Keenan's witnessing of the ugly part of the film industry (Boehm), the reflection of the era's anger on *Opiate* as well as on *Undertow* is understandable.

However, since the very beginning, Keenan was afraid that many people would misinterpret Tool music as being a “resurgence of punk rock,” preferring their audience to stand still and “scream their heads off” instead of doing the “slam-dance thing” (Garza, 1). The singer explains that the band has therapeutic reasons for accentuating the negative, comparing it to an Anonymous Alcoholics meeting where a person gives a speech about the downfall caused by alcoholism (Boehm). And most importantly, he makes clear that the distinction between anger and hate is clear enough:

The songs are very angry, but anger is a constructive emotion, hate is not. We're not about hate, we're about anger and emotion and intense release of feelings, and working through those feelings. With some bands the cornerstone of the music is that rage and hate, and you've got to relive it on stage every night. How is it constructive for you to be hateful every night? [...] You've just got to move on. (“Interview,” *WARP*)

That is, as Keenan states, these lyrics help him to “move on,” that is evolve. As he puts it, “we all really need to be moving on our own accord, finding the messiah within ourselves that's

going to lead us to the promised land, whatever the hell that may be” (“Interview,” *WARP*). Most of the songs from Keenan’s earlier era deal with various aspects of manipulation and control, which then lead to certain actions taken by the narrator. I will provide a reading of Keenan’s lyrics that support the artist’s argument on evolution. If we define evolution as “gradual development to [...] change” (“Evolution”), the assertion that the common theme of Keenan’s lyrics is evolution becomes reasonable. When Keenan was asked about the theme of *Aenima*, he answered that “a lot of the album is about change and evolution and unity” (“Tool,” *SLUG*). And as the inside sleeve for *Aenima* says: “Every time a scientist, philosopher, artist or athlete pushes out thresholds to new ground, the entire race evolves.” The idea behind the title of *Lateralus* was also explained: “It’s more about lateral thinking and how the only way to really evolve as an artist – or as a human, I think – is to start trying to think outside of the lines and push your boundaries” (Sorrels). In other words, the theme of evolution is evident.

I have classified the notion of evolution in Keenan’s lyrics into three distinct categories. The first one is what I call “Evolution through Control,” that is gaining control over yourself by understanding the tendencies that can manipulate a person, whether it is control in relation to other people or being manipulated by substance abuse. The second category is “Evolution of Society,” which is focused on causing changes in society. And the last one is mostly focused on upholding of one’s positive attributes. This category is called in my thesis as “Furthering the Evolution.”

Further distinction of the categories must be made. The first and the third may be viewed by some as overlapping. Though both dealing with the development of one’s personality, the differences between them can be clearly set. The important factor in dividing lyrics into one of these two categories is the starting point of a particular text. Necessity of evolution – that is change – is contained within the first category. In other words, the lyrics in

this part are written from a point of view where the narrator is forced by circumstances outside his or her control to consider he or she is being manipulated. This understanding leads to change, i.e. evolving, of the character. In contrast, the third category focuses on further developing of qualities or virtues gained by taking action through the first category. Moreover, the fact that the narrator is capable of acting towards the particular development on his or her own will is underlined in the third set of lyrics. The change is not forced in any way by any outside factor. And the second category can be also seen as overlapping into the first or the third. While the reading of Keenan's lyrics is my own personal and possibly erroneous in some instances, the presence of the lyrics in the second category is justified by the broader concepts they address. Of course, some lyrics can be still viewed as belonging into more than one category I have set. However, by combining with more clearly classifiable lyrics a link will be presented, which substantiates my categorization.

The first category deals with mostly introspective lyrics examining various ways of manipulation as well as possible traumatizing experiences such as substance abuse. The latter surely falls within this category, for drug addiction definitely gains control over person's action. And while the third category may deal with few negative qualities as well, they are incomparable with the lyrics in the first category in both their tone and optionality of the choice to change.

2.1 Evolution through Control

Manipulation is a common theme for the singer. The live version of "Third Eye," which can be found on *Salival*, begins with this speech sample of Timothy Leary:

Think for yourself. Question authority. Throughout human history, as our species has faced the frightening, terrorizing fact that we do not know who we are, [...] it has been the authorities, the political, the religious, the educational authorities who attempted to comfort us by giving us order, rules, regulations, informing, forming in our minds their view of reality.

The idea to “think for yourself, before somebody does it for you” is one of Tool’s cornerstones (Pettigrew). It is often stressed by the band members. For example, at the end of a Tool concert in the Rod Laver Arena, Keenan made the audience take a “non-conformist” oath: “Repeat after me: Think for yourself, question authority, strive to be different and unique, never repeat things other people say” (Donovan), thus testing the audience’s grasp of the band’s philosophy. In other words, manipulation and control is a common theme in Keenan’s lyrics, which is addressed both directly and indirectly. According to the singer’s philosophy, resistance to being manipulated is the basis for both personal and social development. With this in mind, the discussion of the first category of “Evolution lyrics” can begin.

In order to stop being manipulated, an individual must gain control over himself. Numerous Keenan’s songs deal with progressing through this process, the beginning being reflected in “Part of Me.” The song seems to be narrated from a different person’s point of view, claiming that he or she knows the reader “better than one might think.” That is, the main character is, in fact, the receiver of the message, letting to be controlled by the narrator’s claim to be a part of him or her. The passivity of the main character is underlined by the fact that the receiver of the message cannot interfere in any way with the song’s plot. He or she acts only as a witness. The song concludes by the narrator proclaiming that the receiver of the message is a part of him or her. “Jerk-off” also deals with person’s inability to act. It discusses whether or not it is right to take justice into own hands, that is to punish “those / Who dare to cross the line.” The dilemma of the narrator is following:

Consequences dictate
Our course of action
And it doesn’t matter what’s right.
It’s only wrong if you get caught.
If consequences dictate
My course of action
I should play GOD
And shoot you myself.

In other words, the narrator recognizes someone's wrongful act; however, the fact that the word "should" is used in the song means that the narrator knows about a person's faults but does not act, further stressing the passivity theme. This indecisiveness is further specified in "Intolerance":

Shroud of virtue hung to mask your stigma
As I smile and laugh and dance
And sing your glory
While you
Lie, cheat, and steal.
How can I tolerate you.

The song uses United States Military Academy's Honor Code "I will not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do" (Akhtar, 2) to display the person's dilemma. However, this time the narrator comes to satisfactory decision: the protagonist blames others as well as himself or herself for being too sympathetic and concludes that by tolerating someone's guilt "no one is innocent." Although the main character still does not act, he or she finally succeeds in clarifying his or her own opinions, which is basis for taking further action. That is, by understanding a person's inference willpower and control are strengthened.

The notion of control is further emphasized in "H" and "Pushit." When the former was played live, Keenan touched the meaning behind the song as having an angel sitting on one shoulder and a devil sitting on the other (Akhtar, 2). The idea of two different powers affecting the main character can be seen in the songs lines: "The snake behind me hisses / What my damage could have been. / My blood before me begs me / Open up my heart again." In other words, the narrator is faced by similar dilemma as in the previous songs discussed, this time complicated by the opposing forces: one warning and the other one luring the main character. However, these powers are both fatal for the narrator, although unintentionally: "They're both totally void of hate, But killing me just the same." And although the protagonist tries to choose one over the other – for later in the song "the snake is drowned" –

he or she is still in danger. The song concludes with the narrator consciously succumbing to outside influences, stopping halfway through the process of gaining control. The narrator finally gathers his or her strength in “Pushit” and is able to challenge the manipulator. The song again deals with unintentional hurt and damage, this time probably caused by the narrator’s partner. While the main character enjoys being affected by the partner – “I’m alive when you’re touching me, / Alive when you’re shoving me down.” – he or she is also aware of being manipulated and decides to act. This is represented by the following lines: “If, when I say I may fade like a sigh if I stay, / You minimize my movement anyway, / I must persuade you another way.” The song ends with the main character decided to kill the manipulating partner, although still being in love. However, while “Pushit” may be perceived as violent, it also offers a different perspective. As Keenan clarified during a concert, the song is not about violence but an attempt to encourage compassion for others rather than ignorant fear (Reynolds). This then provides enough information for stating that the main character has failed again. Although finally resolving to action, choosing radical and violent act instead of trying to understand one’s motives leads to the death of his or her beloved one. That serves in the song as evidence of the main character’s yielding to manipulation, for he or she is controlled by fear. To sum it up, the character managed to act fully for the first time; however, the fact that the main character’s action leads to death of his or her partner confirms that the character’s decision was wrong.

The song’s protagonist in “Rose” is finally able to challenge the manipulator. Although again beginning from the position of the oppressed – “Again I’m treading so soft and lightly / Compromising my will I am.” – the character then refuses to play a “Deer in the headlights / Locked down and horrified.” And the realization of the necessity to refuse being controlled is displayed by the narrator in the following way:

When push comes to pull
Comes to shove comes to step

Around this self destructive dance
That never would've ended 'till
I rose
I roared aloud here.

The narrator's determination to cease being controlled by someone else is described by the closing lines "I will / I am." And the song "Passive" continues where "Rose" ended. After the character's willpower is obtained, his or her contempt for passivity and controllable individuals is clear. The song's hero hopes that his or her antagonist will find the courage to challenge him or her instead of being passive, displayed in the song as "Dead as dead can be" stasis of the antagonist.

However, a person must be not egoistic while exercising his or her will, for ego is also manipulative. "Reflection" discusses the way information is reflected by human ego. As Keenan explains:

The moon reflects sunlight like humans information. We wax and wane and when we become full moons, our egos are full. We think we have this knowledge when [...] the information we have is pure. And how it reflects or shines off of us, is something we take credit for as though the moon could take credit for its brightness when [...] it is only reflecting light from the sun. We have to understand that we are ego-less just as the moon is without light. [...] The ego is not responsible for the information. (diCarlo)

This idea is included in the song's lines "As full as bright I am / This light is not my own and / A million light reflections pass over me." That is, "Reflection" is an introspective song dealing with communication, perception and the way human ego affects them. While the song's protagonist is unaware of it at first, his or her perception is changed:

And as I pull my head out I am without one doubt
Don't wanna be down here feeding my narcissism.
I must crucify the ego before it's far too late
I pray the light lifts me out
Before I pine away.

As the title of the song as well as the second line of the excerpt above suggest, the song uses the myth of Narcissus to portray the importance of ego (Jegede). In other words, the individual's struggle for gaining control over his or her own actions is now complete – now

that the willpower is gained, the main protagonist is not only able to face manipulating people, but also display disdain for passivity he or she previously held as well as being able to perceive his or her own ego and the way it affects his or her perception of the world.

The other theme in Keenan's lyrics fitting into the "Evolution through control" category is addiction, for it manipulates the addicted person – the craving must be satiated. This obsession takes many forms in the singer's lyrics. "Sober," a song inspired by a friend of the band who is at his artistic best when "loaded" ("Tool Guitarist"), deals with the issue of substance addiction. The lyrics emphasize the manipulating effect of addiction:

There's a shadow just behind me,
Shrouding every breath I take,
Making every promise empty,
Pointing every finger at me.

In other words, the addicted person does everything to satiate his or her craving. The "shadow" in the song seems to represent the person's changed behavior – the addicted does not shun lying or stealing, which he or she acknowledges: "I am just a worthless liar. / I am just an imbecile. / I will only complicate you. / Trust in me and fall as well." The tragedy of the plot is underlined by the fact that the addicted person knows of his or her addiction and although disapproving it, nothing is done to "kick the habit." And the song's closing line – "Trust me" – only increases the tension of "Sober." The addicted character begs for other person's confidence, although knowing that he or she cannot be trusted. The theme of drug addiction is further stressed in "The Package" by A Perfect Circle. The song again emphasizes the untrustworthiness of an addicted person; however, this time from a point of view of a person not regretting his or her addiction. The narrator's main interest lies in receiving his regular dose and he or she is willing to use any of the skills needed to obtain it:

Smile and drop the cliché
'Till you think I'm listening.
I take just what I came for
Then I'm out the door again.

In other words, not only is the main character manipulated by the drug addiction, but he or she further manipulates others. “Pet,” also found on *Thirteenth Step*, deals with addiction as well.

“Weak and Powerless,” another A Perfect Circle song from *Thirteenth Step* album, deals with the theme of addiction and subsequent manipulation from a different point of view. During an interview with Kurt Loder, Keenan was asked if the album *Thirteenth Step* refers to the Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step rehabilitation program. The singer clarified that the album’s title is not “specifically for people who are going through recovery, although that metaphor is absolutely present. Many of the songs are sung from [...] the perspective of a person who is in denial about a loved one, and from the drug perspective itself.” That is, while “The Package” obviously belongs to the latter category, “Weak and Powerless” seem to belong to the former. In this song the narrator is manipulated by his feelings to his partner:

Little angel go away
Come again some other day
The devil has my ear today
I’ll never hear a word you say.
Promised I would find a little solace
And some peace of mind
Whatever just as long as I don’t feel so
Desperate and ravenous.

To put it differently, the lover’s denial leads the main character to find a way to comfort himself or herself. The devil in the song can suggest anything from self-destructive behavior to drugs, but it definitely symbolizes the character’s desire to resolve the problem in an ineffective way, for the angel – probably symbolizing a constructive solution of the problem– is chased away. A reasonable, logical answer to the problem of addiction of any kind and the following manipulation is represented by the song “The Outsider.” The song promotes optimism and reasoning as a permanent solution for life problems.

A person can be also manipulated through sex. “The Hollow” deals with brief loveless sexual encounters. The subject of the song tries to find satisfaction in these single night experiences; however, these experience do not provide the contentment he or she is looking

for, only “temporarily pacifying” the song’s protagonist. The result is search for another sexual encounter, leading to the person’s manipulation similar to drug addiction:

Libido throw
Dominoes of indiscretions down
Falling all around in cycles, in circles
Constantly consuming, conquer and devour.

The song ends by inviting its listeners to “permanently fill this hollow,” in other words to find a permanent partner. Another song dealing with sexuality is for example “Magdalena,” which will be discussed later. However, arguably the most interesting song dealing with manipulation through sex is “Prison Sex.”

Although the title may suggest different connotations, the song deals with recognizing the cycle of child abuse (Genovese). The accompanying video, directed as every other Tool video except “Hush” by the band’s guitarist Adam Jones, as well as the song both deal with the issue of child abuse in an artful style, with the video being a surrealistic interpretation of the involuntary circle of retribution caused by molestation (Jenison). However, although the clip has an abstract storyline, no actors as well as no explicit scenes and has been called “a film masterpiece,” it was deemed by Canada’s MuchMusic TV channel as too graphic and offensive. The channel put it on *Too Much 4 Much*, a series dedicated to discuss controversial videos, alongside “an atypically idiotic titty video [...] by some rap act” (Genovese). MTV also took steps against the video by stopping airing it after a few viewings (“A Tool”). These reactions were due to a symbolic dealing with the issue of child abuse. Moreover, then MuchMusic’s Director of Music Programming, Denise Donlon, bullied Keenan into admitting that he had been a victim of child abuse (Genovese). Interestingly, some psychologists urged their patients to watch “Prison Sex” video as part of their therapy, thus proving the artistic value of the video.

Adam Jones further explains the idea behind the song that it “is about someone who is sexually molested as a child, yet puts it out his mind because of the trauma. When he’s older,

he releases this hidden trauma by sexually molesting a child himself” (Jenison). This is expressed by the song’s line “Do unto others what has been done to you,” thus twisting “Do for others what you want them to do for you” from Matthew 7:12 (qtd. in Schalin). This verse displays the fatality of the narrator’s childhood experience of abuse: the narrator recognizes this as a norm – “For one sweet moment I am whole” – and even claims that “There’s release in this sodomy.” And the aspect of retribution is underlined by one of the closing lines: “I have come round full circle.”

Although not being definitely the first song dealing with child abuse, Suzanne Vega’s “Luka” being one of the prime examples, Keenan again focuses on the way individuals can be manipulated. Whether influenced by drug addiction or traumatizing experience, the affected person involuntary loses control over his or her actions, succumbing to the manipulation. In other words, the singer not only discusses various issues in his lyrics, but also uses these themes to skillfully pinpoint the diverse ways a person succumbs to manipulation, whether the loss of control originates from direct influences such as drugs or indirect influences like uncertainty and loss of willpower.

2.2 Evolution of Society

The second category of evolution songs deals with Keenan’s more socially oriented lyrics as well as with several political songs. The first single from *Ænima*, “Stinkfist,” again sparked some controversy by its title and is known as “Track #1” on MTV (Akhtar, 2). The channel’s decision to censor the song’s title led to criticism from both fans and press (Gennaro; Akhtar, 2). It is also one of the reasons Keenan does not like to print lyrics, for, evidently, “people don’t get it” (Gennaro). While perceived by most as a song about “a seemingly uncomfortable sexual act” at first, the lyrics deal with desensitization and overexposure of media (Atkinson). Keenan sings about sticking his “finger,” then “knuckle”

and then “elbow deep within the borderline” as well as “I don’t want it / But I need it”; however, the song also contains the line “constant over stimulation numbs me,” hinting a hidden meaning of the song, which is fully expressed in the following lines: “Desensitized to everything / What became of subtlety?” The use of the “dirty fist” metaphor lead critics to praise the songs lyrics as conceptually brilliant (Gennaro), comparing it to William Shakespeare’s quote from *Macbeth* “Fair is foul, and foul is fair¹⁰.” The video for “Stinkfist” only supports the desensitization argument. Among other things, it features an unusual television screen with apparently hypnotizing effect on the protagonists of the video. A large respirator-like machine with addictive characteristics can be also seen in the clip, thus Keenan is apparently arguing that television and drugs share the same luring, addictive and dulling features.

This idea is further emphasized in “Vicarious,” which features some of Keenan’s most straightforward lyrics (Theakston, 1). The song is practically a harsh commentary on the thrill of a television spectator: “I need to watch things die / From a good safe distance / Vicariously, I / Live while the whole world dies.” The song then aims at the passivity of such person, warning that such behavior can be dangerous:

The universe is hostile
So impersonal
Devour to survive
So it is, so it’s always been.

The song’s concept is also further stressed by the accompanying video. It features a character called “X-spector,” probably consisting of the words “spectator” and “expect.” Furthermore,

¹⁰ While this comparison may be seen as exaggerated, it is definitely valid. For example, the song “Message to Harry Manback” seems to be a love song due to the piano tune, while it is actually a death threat. And the German-sung “Die Eier Von Satan” appears to be a speech from a Fascist rally, although it is merely a recipe for cookies with no eggs.

the video contains the painting “Net of Being” by the painter Alex Grey¹¹, who explains the connection between the painting and the song on *Vicarious* audio commentary:

“[The song] deals with something we don’t necessary want to face ourselves. [...] Culturally we, just like the Roman civilization, all watch the death spectacle and seem to be remote from it. The real position there though is that we’re not obviously disconnected from it.”

In other words, both “Stinkfist” and “Vicarious” criticize inactiveness and apathy of television viewers, but while the former concentrates more on the desensitizing effect of the media, the latter focuses on the aspects of reality TV and tabloid press, for the song’s protagonist enjoys watching news featuring death. The song urges the listeners to pull their heads out of their “hippie haze” and listen to the facts. That is, Keenan is critical of lack of truly important information in the mainstream media, which according to him leads not only to misinformation, but also to an easier control by the government (Loder). The power of the media is also emphasized by the song “Faaip de Oiad.” While the title is Enochian for “Voice of God,” the song is actually a record from the radio call-in show *Coast to Coast AM* with Art Bell, in which “the caller claims to be a former Area 51 employee, and that the military was out to get him” (Akhtar, 2). What the singer offers as a means of solving this situation is turning off the television, reading and exposing oneself to as much information as possible (Borbolla).

The song “Ænema” portrays sinking of the city Los Angeles into the ocean, thus incorporating ideas of the stand-up comedian Bill Hicks from his routine and subsequent album *Arizona Bay*. The comedian is known for his socially-conscious and critical “rants and raves about the human condition” (Gennaro), which earned him a posthumous early day motion by British Member of Parliament Stephen Pound. The MP titled Hicks as unflinching and painfully honest political philosopher, who aimed mainly “at the heart of consumerism,

¹¹ While known for his work on album art, Grey is considered a central figure in the visionary or psychedelic school: he has sold more than 100,000 copies of a coffee table book and sold paintings for as much as \$100,000. See <<http://asap.ap.org/stories/575717.s>>

capitalism and the American Dream” (Pound). The title of *Arizona Bay* is explained in the first track of the album, “Goodbye You Lizard Scum”: “When L.A. falls in the fucking ocean and is flushed away, all it will leave is Arizona Bay.” “Ænema” reflects the same attitude. The song begins with the lines “Some say the end is near. / Some say we’ll see Armageddon soon. / I certainly hope we will,” thus portraying the singer’s frustration by the city. Then he continues to mention various reasons to flush this “one great big festering neon distraction”: lawsuits, contracts and hairpieces as well as “gun-toting hip gangster wannabes” – that is gangsta rappers – and “smiley glad-hands with hidden agendas,” which may refer to politicians as well as lawyers. The song ends with the wish to “flush it down”; the reoccurring line “learn to swim” serves as a warning about the upcoming end of the city. Keenan, contemplating the idea of Los Angeles’ end, clarifies that “people in L.A. have lost touch with what really matters” (Wiederhorn) as well as the city “fosters drug-addicted kids by the time they’re 17” (Burgees). Similar criticism of Los Angeles can be also found on the song “L.A.M.C.,” which stands for Los Angeles Municipal Court (Akhtar, 2). The rather odd song consists of a recording of an automated call system, which asks debilitating questions such as “if you have had your eyes tested and voted ‘yes’ on Proposition 187, and have your DD form 3018 filled out and have already reported to the City Attorney but have never been called in for jury duty, press 8.” The singer comments that the song is definitely a tribute to life in Los Angeles and especially to “how sick the red tape is out [there]” (Pinfield).

That is, both songs are critical of the city of Los Angeles and contemporary mainstream culture as well. While that is clear, there is more than that behind the concept of “Ænema.” The song’s title comes from combination of Jungian concept of the “anima” (the word can also mean “soul or consciousness” (Gennaro)), which refers to the feminine inner self of a male (Wiederhorn), and “enema”; the title may also be homage to a book recommended in the band’s newsletter *Ægypt* by John Crowley (Akhtar, 2). Adding Keenan’s

statement that Tool and Hicks resonate similar concepts – unity as the philosophical center, evolution and change, both internal and external as well as individual and global, in other words evolving ideas (Langer) – the true intention behind “Ænema” becomes clear. While it is certainly a song critical of Los Angeles, it also calls for a change of the way people think, criticizing the city’s immersion in unimportant problems. Keenan comments that the message of the song is the following: “Get back in touch with the collective unconscious and learn to swim with everyone in there. Know how connected everything is. Literally, figuratively, spiritually” (Genovese). In other words, the song is in its double meaning conceptually very similar to “Stinkfist.” The difference between the album title – *Ænima* – and the song title – “Ænema” – should be also noted. While the former resembles more the Jungian term, probably indicating that the concept of the album is different from other artists, the latter’s closer resemblance of the word “enema” possibly relates to the seemingly violent nature of the song.

“Rosetta Stoned” seems to follow a similar path as “Ænema”: while it again portrays a tragic event, although on a more personal level, there is also a message communicated within the song. “Rosetta Stoned” features a person who is visited by a “blue-green Jackie Chan with Isabella Rossellini lips” alien. The character is then told by the alien that he or she is the “Chosen One, / the One who will deliver the message. / A message of hope for those who choose to hear it / And a warning for those who do not.” However, the message is not delivered by the song’s protagonist – the character did not manage to remember the message and nobody is convinced by his or her oral account of the event. In the end, the song’s protagonist is confined to a psychiatric asylum. While the plot focuses on the encounter and its result, the song seems to be narrated directly by Keenan in some of its parts: “Born to bear and bring to all the details of our ending, / To write it down for all the world to see.” Keenan comments that “you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink” (Epstein, 2) as

well as “there’s only so many times you can scream warnings at people [...]. By now the only ones meant to hear [the warnings] already have and I need to move on” (Rawwin). In other words, the song is a Rosetta Stone of the band, describing Tool music as “a message of hope for those who choose to hear it”; moreover, the tone of the song fits the “blues album” concept of the record (Epstein, 2). It reflects the fact that, according to Keenan, the band was “trying to push the envelope of consciousness, trying to get people to think for themselves, question authority, and they pretty much haven’t” (Buck). This singer’s claim can be surely understood: while some reviewers have noticed “a catalyst encouraging [listeners] to discover a world around them to which they otherwise might have been blind” (Theakston, 2) in Keenan’s lyrics, many others did not manage to notice these messages. For example, Rolling Stone review claims that “Parabola,” a song about how life should be revered (diCarlo), is a “nightmare” (Fricke). And as will my thesis show, the singer’s songs definitely serve the “message of hope” purpose.

There is also a second layer in the song’s meaning, which brings me to focus on Keenan’s overtly political songs of the second category of evolution lyrics. “Rosetta Stoned” can also represent Keenan’s increasing disillusionment in the wake of George W. Bush’s re-election and the ignorance of the “steady stream of scandals and screw-ups” by the Americans (Epstein, 2). That is symbolized in the song by the main character, who cannot remember a single message and is subsequently tied to a bed. This also brings me to the second layer of “Reflection.” The song deals with information on both personal and public level. As Keenan states, the information is always pure in itself (diCarlo); it depends on the individual how to use it. In other words, the song also argues against media bias as well as censorship. Keenan was extremely vocal against the influences of CNN to the world, criticizing it of its information bias. The singer concluded that the information from the media must be in the least biased manner possible, thus defining the idea of the second layer of “Reflection.”

Keenan, although not outwardly political at first, became gradually interested in current events. While early Tool song “Hush” deals with censorship, it does with a more socially than politically oriented focus; however, several Keenan’s later works are explicitly political. For example, after the events of 9/11, the singer was labeled by radio stations throughout the Midwest as anti-American solely for encouraging his listeners to investigate on their own (Borbolla). According to the singer, the censorship continued for several years and although he was very vocal about his positions regarding the rights of citizens to ask question of their representatives, most of these topics did not appear in print. This definitely contributed to the singer’s comparison of the situation in the United States to the fall of Rome or Germany (Loder). Keenan’s increased interest in contemporary politics is documented by the fact that *eMOTIVe*, A Perfect Circle’s album of political covers, was intentionally released on the same day as the US presidential election of the year 2004 (“Political”) and *10,000 Days* by Tool was affected by the outcome of the elections (Epstein, 2). Before the elections, A Perfect Circle’s website¹² contained a message from Keenan exhorting fans to vote: “If you choose not to be involved with decisions that affect your life on a daily basis, in our opinion, you forfeit your right to complain about it later” (“Political”). The website also contains World War II posters with satirical texts such as “Together we occupy. Get behind your government, corporate interests and banks.”

Similar aesthetics follow the two official videos accompanying *eMOTIVe*, that is “Counting Bodies Like Sheep to the Rhythm of the War Drums,” a remix version of “Pet,” and a cover of John Lennon’s “Imagine.” As commented on the *aMotion* DVD commentary, the former is a second part of “Pet” rather than a remix. Both the song and its video focus on a political agenda instead of drug addiction. In other words, the song’s lines, although the same – “Safe from pain and truth and choice and other poison devils, / See, they don’t give a fuck

¹² Aperfectcircle.com

about you, like I do” – have gained another meaning: they focus on government and media manipulation. The accompanying video is also very vocal against the Bush administration. The song “Imagine” is much darker than the original. The clip, inspired by satirical video “Beautiful World” by the band Devo as pointed out by the singer (“Maynard Speaks”), is composed of footage from the Iraq War as well as election campaigns, while satirical stock quotes and sports scores scroll bellow¹³. Although the video attracted unprecedented online traffic since its release (“A Perfect Circle Release”), according to the singer, it did not get any airplay on television (Borbolla). As it was already mentioned, this was not the first case of the singer’s works being censored. Most recently, Puscifer’s debut is not sold in Target and Wal-Mart stores (Coy), probably due to the album title containing the word “vagina.” Keenan also appears on another politically oriented Election Day album, for he provided vocals for several songs on *Concert Series Volume I* by Axis of Justice¹⁴.

“Right in Two” was described as the most political song written by Keenan (Rawwin), to which the singer replied: “I’m not so sure if I would say political. But a lot of the record is. We have an idiot in the White House whose actions are going to affect our children’s futures so of course it’s on our mind.” The song is definitely one of Keenan’s most outspoken social commentaries. The lyrics describe angels “puzzled and amused,” not understanding human wars when “Eden has enough to go around”:

Monkey killing monkey killing monkey over pieces of the ground,
Silly monkeys give them thumbs they make a club,
And beat their brother down.
How they survive so misguided is a mystery.

The title of the song refers to the recent political climate in the United States. As Keenan comments, “it’s an amazing [achievement] by this administration to turn everyone against

¹³ For example: “County commissioner Mike Rooney hospitalized with major gunshot wound after accidentally shooting himself in the leg while demonstrating gun safety to local civic group during luncheon.”

¹⁴ Axis of Justice is a non-profit organization formed by the guitarist Tom Morello and the singer Serj Tankian. Its purpose is to bring together musicians, fans of music, and grassroots political organizations to fight for social justice. See <<http://www.axisofjustice.org/>>

each other, and [to make people think] that anyone who speaks out is a dissident who should be shot” (Varga). The song ends with angels “wondering when this tug of war will end,” in other words arguing against war conflicts, particularly against the Iraq War.

Keenan has always been very vocal about negative aspects of contemporary culture. The singer criticizes the “mediocrity and banality” of contemporary culture, to quote Bill Hicks. Whether targeting television and mainstream media in general or urging his listeners not to rely on these outlets, the singer is true to his philosophy. The lyrics in this chapter also portray Keenan’s growing disillusionment with the current status quo, resulting in the song “Rosetta Stoned,” which hints that Keenan has already commented on various issues and does not want to repeat himself. And although he has become gradually interested in politics, this is only a different expression of the singer’s ideas of questioning and individuality, which have always remained the same.

2.3 Furthering the Evolution

As it has been already shown, the theme of evolution in Keenan’s lyrics is apparent. The artist focuses on the way an individual or the whole society can advance by discussing various negative traits the individual or the society has. However, there are also many songs which discuss evolution without using the negative. These songs focus either on the anticipation of the evolution or on traits connected with the changes of human mind due to the evolution.

One of the songs directly focusing on evolution is “Forty-Six & 2.” As it is explained in the “Tool FAQ,” the major ideas in the song relate to chromosomes, Jungian theory and teachings of Drunvalo Melchizedek¹⁵. The title refers to an idea by Melchizedek that two chromosomes would be added to the current DNA structure, which consists of 44 autosomes

¹⁵ Melchizedek focuses on sacred geometry, human energy fields, spirituality and meditation.
< <http://www.drunvalo.net/bio.html> >

and two sex chromosomes. The next genetic “make-up” should lead to a new state of evolution, for, according to Melchizedek, the current state of human DNA is a disharmonic one. The scientist claims that this change should lead to a unity consciousness “that does not see anything outside themselves as being separate from themselves.” The Jungian term included in the song, the “shadow,” describes a kind of unconscious “counter-ego” consisting of rejected traits¹⁶. The shadow “is the most powerful and potentially the most dangerous [archetype]. It represents everything about ourselves that we fear and despise.” “Forty-Six & 2” portrays a person with unidentifiable problems: “I’ve been wallowing in my own confused / And insecure delusions.” The character feels that an issue exists and decides to solve the matter. The issue is resolved as indicated by the closing lines:

See my shadow changing,
Stretching up and over me.
Soften this old armor.
Hoping I can clear the way
By stepping through my shadow,
Coming out the other side.
Step into the shadow.
Forty six and two are just ahead of me.

While perhaps still unclear, the song’s message is explained by the following Keenan’s comment:

“I think most of us grew up in a pretty sterile environment [...]. And the world’s just not like that, and I think that the sooner people get to the point that the ugly stuff is just as real as the beautiful stuff, that it goes hand in hand, then we can go on evolving” (“Tool,” *MuchMusic*).

In other words, the song’s character voluntarily decided to solve his or her problems by challenging the “counter-ego.” The challenge resulted in a change of the character’s self and the line “Coming out the other side” points out that the change is a positive one. A similar concept seems to be included in “Breña” by A Perfect Circle: “Guide me safely in worlds I’ve never been / To heal me, heal me, my dear Breña.” To conclude, the song discusses rejected

¹⁶ See <<http://www.shadowdance.com/shadow/theshadow.html>>

traits of one's personality and encourages its listeners to face these traits in order to learn from them and, eventually, evolve.

"Third Eye" also focuses on evolution; however, this time encouraged by the usage of drugs. The song starts with the following sample by the comedian Bill Hicks:

If you don't believe drugs have done good things for us, do me a favor. Go home tonight and take all your albums, all your tapes and all your CDs and burn 'em, 'cause you know what? The musicians who made all that great music that's enhanced your lives throughout the years were real fuckin' high on drugs.

However, "Third Eye" does not promote abusive usage of drugs. This is suggested by the title itself, for the third eye is a metaphysical and esoteric concept associated with higher consciousness named in the Indian tradition as *jnana-chaksu*, that is "the eye of knowledge" ("Third Eye"). Moreover, there is also another quote by Bill Hicks in the song, which specifies the song's aim:

Today, a young man on acid realized that all matter is merely energy condensed to a slow vibration. That we are all one consciousness experiencing itself subjectively. There's no such thing as death, life is only a dream and we're imagination of ourselves. Here's Tom with the weather.

Keenan himself is also very vocal about the correct understanding of the song: "There's a responsibility that comes along with exploring those different perspectives and those different realities" (Garza, 2). At the beginning of the song, the main character recollects a dream featuring a face "comforting [the character] with its three warm and wild eyes," symbolizing enlightenment and knowledge. Then the song's protagonists wipes "the webs and the dew from [his or her] withered eye," in other words the character's desire for a change is present. After the character realizes that "life is but a dream," a dialogue with the three-eyed face, i.e. enlightenment, begins. The face is glad to finally see the song's protagonist, thinking that he or she was "chasing the tail of dogma." On the contrary, the song's hero thought that the face was hiding. The song ends with the line "Prying open my third eye," that is the character hopes for spiritual elevation. Justin Chancellor commented that the song "addresses the

subject matter of the entire album,” using the voice of Hicks as a theme setter in the song as well as a key theme in the artwork and album (Rev. of *Ænima*, *Rover*). It must be also noted that the process of the song can involve danger. Keenan explains: “The chorus ‘Prying open my third eye’ refers to what you do when you take chemicals. If you’re not prepared to see once it’s open, it’s going to be a horrible experience for you” (Garza, 2). Nevertheless, the singer advises that putting the fear aside and going with passion and understanding is a good start for anyone who desires to use psychedelic drugs in an exploratory way. In other words, the song again deals with evolution and change, this time initiated by the song’s protagonist. And although the process of evolving may include some uncomfortable experiences, the character is aware of them and willing to challenge them.

“The Grudge” appears to share the message of the two previous songs discussed. The idea of the song can be summarized as unwillingness to change. Before discussing the song, its line “Saturn ascends, comes round again” must be explained. The song uses the metaphor of “Saturn Return,” which is an astronomical occurrence used in astrology to occur in a person’s life at 29.5 years of age (Weiss and Schostak). As Keenan puts, the age “coincides with the majority of people’s reevaluation of their lives,” describing it as a kind of “mid-life crisis, where you step back and reevaluate” (Sorrels). The song also contains the line “Desperate to control all and everything. / Unable to forgive your scarlet letterman.” This is a reference to the novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (Akhtar, 2), thus setting the theme of guilt and forgiveness. The song’s recipient is unwilling to change or reevaluate, which is apparent from the line “Justify denials and grip ‘em to the lonesome end” as well as “Defining, confining, controlling, and we’re sinking deeper.” The process of reevaluation and subsequent evolution is apparent from the following lines:

Saturn comes back around to show you everything
Let’s you choose what you will not see and then
Drags you down like a stone or lifts you up again
Spits you out like a child, light and innocent.

In other words, an event that can potentially mean significant changes for the song's addressee is about to occur and the choice whether or not are the changes accepted is left to the receiver of the message. However, the song's message is made clear by the final lines: "Give away the stone. / Let the waters kiss and transmutate these leaden grudges into gold." In other words, "The Grudge" highlights change and introspection as important factors in life. Similar concept is also resonated in the song "4°":

Locked up inside you,
Like the calm beneath castles,
Is a cavern of treasures that
No one has been to.
Let's go digging.

This message is displayed more straightforwardly in Puscifer's "Sour Grapes": "Fear not the movement of the heavens above or the earth below / For change is what we are, my child."

To sum it up, "Forty-Six & 2," "Third Eye," and "The Grudge" all deal with evolution and change on a broad level, each song discussing evolution from different perspective. While "Forty-Six & 2" expects evolution to come mostly on its own, "Third Eye" utilizes the use of psychedelic drugs and "The Grudge" points out the importance of change in general. Now I will concentrate on songs which deal with evolution from a more optimistic point of view, mostly pointing out positive aspects of life and reality.

While denouncing single night experiences in "The Hollow," "Magdalena" points out healthy aspects of sexuality. The theme is stressed by the song's name, which refers to the popular notion of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute. As Keenan comments, sex is "an extremely creative process" and "one of the most powerful ways of meditation" ("Interview with Tool"). The singer's concept of sex as creative is also reflected by the shape of the figure on "*V*" is for *Vagina* (Broadley). In the song, Keenan addresses Magdalena as an "earthly goddess" as well as "black Madonna," in other words elevating sexuality. The lines "I bear witness / To this place, this prayer, so long forgotten" probably describe sexual act itself. It is also further

stressed by the line “Holiest of altars,” which most likely portrays woman genitalia. Keenan’s view of sex as beneficial is also represented by songs such as “Queen B” or “Rev 22:20,” and the lines “Choosing to be here in / This body / This body holding me” from “Parabola” seem to have sexual connotations as well. The singer also commented on the so-called “Nipplegate,” that is the *Super Bowl XXXVIII* halftime show controversy in which Janet Jackson’s bare breast was exposed by Justin Timberlake: “It’s ridiculous. They’re acting like the whole country is five [years old]. People can judge for themselves. I think everybody has nipples” (Titus). In other words, Keenan does not stray using sexuality in his lyrics; however, the usage is not a provocative one.

Lateralus was defined by Keenan to be mostly about re-communication and “understanding where you are in reference to where you’ve been and where you’re going” (Sorrels), which is apparent in the first single from the album, the Grammy-winning “Schism.” While communication on a personal level was already explored by Keenan in “Thomas,” “Schism” apparently also has a wider layer:

Cold silence has a tendency to atrophy any
Sense of compassion
Between supposed lovers
Between supposed brothers.

The use of “brothers” indicates that the song’s use of communication is a universal one: on one level “Schism” portrays misunderstanding between individuals; on another it represents humanity as a whole, thus being similar to “Right in Two.” The song’s line “Finding beauty in the dissonance” celebrates difference of opinion as a test for communication. However, the song also portrays that lack of understanding for different opinions often leads to arguments. The line “Doomed to crumble unless we grow, and strengthen our communication” thus sums up the re-communication theme of the song. The song’s line “I know the pieces fit,” appearing both at the beginning and the end of the song, displays the singer’s belief in understanding and compassion, which is the core message of the song.

“Parabola” and “Lateralus” both celebrate life and reality. In “Parabola” Keenan sings about “holy reality” and “holy experience.” As the singer explains, “life is to be revered. Few people take the time to realize how valuable their experiences are at any given time in their lives because we can be snuffed out in the next minute” (diCarlo). This is reflected in the song’s line “Recognize this as a holy gift and celebrate this chance to be alive and breathing.” In other words, the song encourages its listeners not to take things for granted as well as celebrates life itself. Similar message is also communicated by A Perfect Circle song “The Outsider.” In the song, Keenan addresses a person who wants to commit suicide as a means of solving problems. The song ends by the following statement by the singer:

Disconnect and self destruct, one bullet at a time.
What’s your hurry, everyone will have his day to die.
If you choose to pull the trigger, should your drama prove sincere,
Do it somewhere far away from here.

To put it differently, “The Outsider” appears to be a continuation of “Parabola.” While the latter celebrated life in general, the former is aimed at those who did not understand the message communicated in “Parabola,” ridiculing anyone thinking that suicide is a solution to problems encountered in life.

“Lateralus” starts with the following lines: “Black then white are all I see in my infancy. / Red and yellow then came to be, reaching out to me. / Lets me see.” Not only do these lines contain colors important for Native Americans (diCarlo) most probably used as a metaphor for lateral thinking (Sorrels), that is discovering new aspects of reality, but, interestingly, these lines are also sung in the Fibonacci Sequence¹⁷ (diCarlo). The song in its chorus warns against relying on reasoning alone: “Over thinking, over analyzing separates the body from the mind. / Withering my intuition leaving all these opportunities behind.” As Keenan clarifies, “your mental, your emotional, and your physical body are inseparable if you

¹⁷ The sequence was discovered by Leonardo Fibonacci in 1202. Each number in the sequence is generated by adding the previous two. See Anderson, Frazier, and Popendorf:
<<http://library.thinkquest.org/27890/theSeries1.html>>

want to evolve. [...] If you eliminate the emotional, your evolution comes to a screeching halt and you just become a lawyer¹⁸” (Gulka). “Lateralus” invites its listener to broaden his or her horizons by using the metaphor of the Fibonacci Spiral¹⁹, for its exponential growth parallels the rapid growth of the series itself (Anderson, Frazier, and Popendorf):

I’m reaching up and reaching out,
I’m reaching for the random or what ever will bewilder me.
And following our will and wind we may just go where no one’s been
We’ll ride the spiral to the end and may just go where no one’s been.
Spiral out. Keep going.

To put it simple, Keenan uses the Fibonacci Spiral to reflect his message of evolution. The singer urges his listeners to live laterally like the Fibonacci Spiral: always developing, flourishing and thriving (“The Fibonacci”), in other words evolving.

“The Patient” and “Jambi” deal with various stages of the evolution process. The former illustrates that the course of change can be lengthy; however, Keenan assures his listeners that the outcome of the process is worth waiting:

If there were no rewards to reap,
No loving embrace to see me through
This tedious path I’ve chosen here,
I certainly would’ve walked away by now.
Gonna wait it out.

In other words, patience is a virtue necessary for further improvement of one’s situation, which is stressed by the lines “But I’m still right here / Giving blood, keeping faith.” Thus Keenan points out the difference between inactive passivity and patience, which is a deliberate, thus active, choice of behavior. While “The Patient” is focused on the process of change, “Jambi” focuses on its upholding. The song’s character is materially secured: “Feast like a sultan I do / On treasures and flesh never few.” However, he or she realizes that there

¹⁸ Keenan’s contempt for lawyers is understandable, for he has encountered several legal battles with record companies. This is for example reflected in “The Pot” by the verse “Liar, lawyer, mirror show me. What’s the difference?”

¹⁹ The Fibonacci Spiral is a geometric spiral whose growth is regulated by the Fibonacci Series. See Anderson, Frazier, and Popendorf :<<http://library.thinkquest.org/27890/theSeries6.html>>

are more important aspects of life than wealth: “But I would wish it all, away / If I thought I’d lose you just one day.” Then the song’s protagonist explains that he or she would dispose of wealth in favor of spiritual growth:

So if I could I’d wish it all away
If I thought tomorrow would take you away.
You, my piece of mind, my all, my center,
Just trying to hold on one more day.

To put it differently, the character realizes that material wealth can corrupt even someone who has already undergone changes in his or her perception of the world. Then he or she wishes that this confusion disappears: “Shine on benevolent sun / Shine down upon the broken / Shine until the two become one.” The song ends by “Silence, legion. Stay out of my way,” which may symbolize contempt for consumerism as well as belief for better future. While “piece of mind” may symbolize a person, the song’s theme is definitely unity and evolution, for being “one” symbolizes a fully evolved individual.

To conclude, this chapter portrayed Keenan’s lyrics overtly dealing with evolution and change. While the first part of this chapter focused on the lyrics directly discussing the evolution itself, the second part aimed at the lyrics describing positive aspects of one’s changed self. It is also apparent, that Keenan’s lyrics have also undergone an evolution. The lyrics from this chapter, which are mostly from his later works, are very different from Keenan’s earlier lyrics. As it is apparent, his first lyrics were fueled by anger predominant of that era; after being cleansed by discussing the darker aspects of humanity, the singer moved on to discuss more abstract, spiritual concepts.

3 Religious songs

Being raised in a Baptist family, Maynard James Keenan's life was directly affected by religion, which has become a common theme in his lyrics. *Opiate*, as already stated above, is named after the aforementioned Karl Marx quote. The title song, "Opiate," is influenced by Keenan's first-hand experiencing of organized religion:

Choices always were a problem for you,
What you need is someone strong to guide you,
Deaf and blind and dumb and born to follow,
What you need is someone strong to guide you,
Like me.

This criticizing of religion was not uncommon at that time; however a distinction must be made. While many artists focused on religion – Ministry in their song "Psalm 69," for example – Keenan focuses more on the aspects of manipulation and obeying. In an interview for the magazine *Rock Power* he further explains his disdain for organized religion, criticizing it for often becoming a cult of personality ideas:

[Jerry Falwell, Robert Tilton and others] take the idea of manipulation to an extreme, though I'm often disgusted by the people who feel they have to be manipulated [...]. I have a hard time with the concept of God because I've been raised in the Christian Church. I don't have faith in their idea of what God is; I think it's a collective idea. That it comes out of the center of us. (Wilding)

Keenan is especially critical of rigid rules often incorporated in organized religion. Dogma and manipulation, not religion itself, are his reasons why he puts religion under question: "Religion [...] is often associated with dogma, with an established order. Religion is something wonderful which, unfortunately, can be negatively exploited" ("Interview with Tool"). In other words, the way religion is organized, not faith itself, is the target of the singer's lyrics.

During their beginning, Tool embraced a pseudophilosophy called "lachrymology," that is "the study of crying" (Blake). This philosophy, formulated by Ronald P. Vincent, uses crying as a therapy and claims that only through pain, both physical and emotional, can one

grow and evolve to a higher level of being. Tool also claims that lachrymology became the inspiration for the formation of the band as well as its name. However, this is widely believed to be a disinformation and one of the first examples of the band tinkering with the press and the public's gullibility (Sokal), as *The Joyful Guide to Lachrymology*, the Vincent's supposed seminal work, is impossible to find and is not even registered in the Library of Congress (Blake). Moreover, the work's name itself seems to be inappropriate due to the fact that Vincent allegedly wrote it after the death of his wife. Many also believe that the band's intention was to parody religious cults, in particular "dianetics" and the Church of Scientology, founded by L. Ron Hubbard, as it "betrays the band's ethics about how a person should not follow a belief system that constricts their development as a human being" (Sokal). Their dislike for scientology was for example observed during a show played in May 1993 at the Garden Pavilion in Hollywood. When learning that the venue is owned and funded by Hubbard's Church of Scientology, Keenan loudly bleated like a sheep throughout the band's set (Akhtar, 2). Keenan's resentment towards Scientology is also documented in the song "Ænema."

While "Opiate" explores this issue from a third-person's point of view, "Eulogy" comments on it from a perspective of an individual directly influenced by a leading religious figure. The song again points out the tendency of people to identify with a strong individual, which can be subsequently abused and these people manipulated:

Standing above the crowd,
He had a voice so strong and loud and I
Swallowed his facade cuz I'm so
Eager to identify with
Someone above the ground,
Someone who seemed to feel the same,
Someone prepared to lead the way, with
Someone who would die for me.

The song also comments on hypocrisy witnessed by Keenan in belief systems— people claiming one set of beliefs and acting in ways which directly opposed those views (diCarlo).

This is reflected by the lines “You’ve claimed all this time that you would die for me. / Why then are you so surprised to hear your own eulogy?” The song ends by stressing the need to crucify the “next fool martyr.” As Keenan explains, the song is “about tendencies of people wanting to stand on a soap box and sacrifice themselves in some way. We don’t need that process anymore. You’re on your own now” (Borzillo). In other words, the theme of evolution is also present. The following quote from the liner notes of Tool’s 1996 *Aenima* album further expands on the idea of manipulation through religion: “Beliefs are dangerous. Beliefs allow the mind to stop functioning. A non-functioning mind is clinically dead. Believe in nothing.” In other words, another theme of these songs is manipulation. That is a reoccurring motif in Keenan’s lyrics, as it has already been proven. However, the manipulation is not the only motif appearing in Keenan’s lyrics discussing religion.

Other notable song is for example “Flood,” which uses the metaphor of a flood of Biblical proportions. In the song, the main protagonist is aware of possible dangers, which are symbolized by approaching water, and tries to reach higher ground, “some order or sanity.” He or she finds comfort in a spiritual concept hoping that “the sun would deliver [him or her].” To put it differently, the main protagonist believes that the newly found religious aspect of self will lead to salvation from the approaching danger, i.e. reality. However, when his or her beliefs are confronted by this reality, the main character discovers that they are false – instead of redemption, “the truth has come to punish [him or her] instead.” This recognition leaves the main character hoping that by cleansing and purging in the water, he or she will finally gain actual, undistorted perception of reality.

“Disgustipated” is an intriguing look on Keenan’s humorous side. While Keenan’s lyrics are often considered serious, there are many instances of reoccurring humor throughout his work²⁰ (“Tool!”), and “Disgustipated” is regarded by some as the “funniest thing ever put

²⁰ Humor is definitely present in Keenan’s works. Apart from several humorous songs, humor in the singer’s works is apparent in the European inner sleeve of *Aenima* or by his cooperation with various stand-up comedians.

to CD” (Schachtman). The song tells the story of Reverend Maynard, who was in his dream visited by an angel of the Lord. The angel took him above farmlands in the Midwest, where Reverend Maynard suddenly heard “million voices full of fear.” As he asked the angel about the origin of the voices, the angel answered that “these are the cries of the carrots. / [...] Tomorrow is harvest day / And to them it is the Holocaust.” Then Reverend Maynard woke up from his dream in enlightenment: “Hear me now, I have seen the light! / They have a consciousness / They have a life / They have a soul.” The storyline ends with Reverend’s demand that the rabbits should wear glasses, which is then countered by the songs “This is necessary / Life feeds on life / Feeds on life / Feeds on life.” The song is clearly a parody on a “middle man” principle, i.e. clergy (Doreian). During an interview with Professor Christopher diCarlo, who teaches philosophy at University of Guelph in Ontario and uses Tool’s lyrics in his in-class lectures, Keenan made clear that his views against religion in general are directed towards the “middle men,” that is those “who are in power and use religion as a market force by which to manipulate human beings for their own personal gain” (diCarlo). The song thus stresses this principle by ridiculing the “middle man” and his newly gained beliefs.

The most valuable information about Keenan’s views on religion can be seen in what I call “Marie Tetralogy.” This tetralogy is comprised of four songs: three Tool songs – “jimmy,” “Wings for Marie (Pt 1)” and “10,000 Days (Wings Pt 2)” – and one A Perfect Circle song, “Judith.” These songs document the relationship between Keenan and his mother, Judith Marie Keenan/Garrison, who was a Christian “through and through, living her faith” (“Memorial Obituaries”). When Keenan was eleven, his mother suffered a paralyzing cerebral aneurysm, which left her wheel-chair bound for the rest of her life (McAlley). This is reflected in “jimmy,” where Keenan meditates upon the suffering his mother endured. In the song, he addresses himself as “Eleven” through his mother’s eyes. Realizing that her son is

Apart from Hicks, Keenan is associated with David Cross, who recorded audio commentary on *Vicarious* DVD, or with Patton Oswalt.

the main aspect that helped her to live with her paralyzing – “It took so long to realize that / You hold the light that’s been leading me back home” – she hopes that they can “reunite and both move on together.” This song, although not dealing with religion, surely belongs to the “Tetralogy.” The display of affection the singer had to his mother not only helps to understand the struggle Keenan had undergone when dealing with religion in the subsequent songs of the tetralogy, but also stresses the emotional power of the following songs.

The next song, “Judith,” is, as stated in the video commentary on *aMotion* DVD, about Keenan’s mother Judith Marie. In the song, Keenan in an emotional and compelling way criticizes his mother’s faithful dedication to God:

You’re such an inspiration for the ways
That I’ll never ever choose to be
Oh so many ways for me to show you
How the Savior has abandoned you.

Although the song is notorious for the subsequent “Fuck your god” verse (Rev. of A Perfect Circle Concert), Keenan goes beyond the feelings of angst and anger prevailing in the rock music, Marilyn Manson’s “The Fight Song” with the lyrics “But I’m not a slave to a god / That doesn’t exist. / But I’m not a slave to a world / That doesn’t give a shit” being a prime example. “Judith” is again critical of how people tend to be manipulated through religion; in this case Keenan criticizes the passivity of waiting for redemption:

It’s not like you killed someone
It’s not like you drove a hateful spear into his side
Praise the one who left you
Broken down and paralyzed.

The song also criticizes dogma, in other words total acceptance of an opinion without questioning it: “Pray to your Christ, to your god / [...] Even though he’s the one who did this to you / You never thought to question why.” The song ends with stressing the fact that prayers for improving his mother’s condition are hopeless. What strengthens Keenan’s desperate attempt to change the opinion of his mother on faith is “Rose,” song preceding

“Judith” on the album *Mer de Noms*, which emphasizes the importance of individual’s willpower to actively affect one’s being.

Judith Marie Keenan died on 18 June, 2003 of complications from the brain aneurysm (“Memorial Obituaries”). This was announced on the official Tool website, where she was described as “pillar of faith and determination” (“Judith”). This description will be important for the upcoming discussion of the tetralogy. On April 1, 2005, the official Tool website announced that “Maynard has found Jesus” and has left Tool (Harris). This news led to large media coverage, especially by MTV News, which is surprising when considering the fact that it was not the first April Fool’s Day prank (Akhtar, 1) and that Keenan for a time carried business cards with the name “Jesus H. Christ” printed on them (Harris). However, earlier that year it was announced that Brian “Head” Welch from the band Korn has left the band to follow a more spiritual path, which is probably why many believed this news. When Keenan was asked to comment about the “Son of God,” Keenan replied “that guy’s a punk!” and then he answered via e-mail to MTV reporter Kurt Loder: “I was actually surprised people bought it. Especially considering most of the subject matter of my work. ‘Judith’, for example. I guess when I said ‘Fuck your god,’ I didn’t mean the actual God. Just the god of sheep who lack a sense of humor” (Harris). Although considered mostly as a joke, Keenan has, in some aspects, at least come to terms with God. This is reflected in the last two songs of the tetralogy, “Wings for Marie (Pt 1)” and “10,000 Days (Wings Pt 2)” from the album *10,000 Days*. These two title tracks take their name from the length Judith Marie Keenan was paralyzed – she died 27 years after the stroke, which is approximately ten thousand days – and provide passion and introspection complemented by intense emotion and brutal honesty (Theakston, 1). As Theakston puts it, “it’s voyeuristic to listen to someone working out family issues on disc, but Keenan does it in a way that’s sensitive and honest without ever treading

the careful line between melodrama and sincerity.” In these two songs Keenan admires his mother’s faith, determination and willpower.

In “Wings for Marie (Pt 1)” Keenan discusses his own relationship with Judith Marie, mentioning that she “believed in movements none could see.” Then he continues that “[I] fell at the hands of those movements that I wouldn’t see / Yet it was you who prayed for me.” In other words, although paralyzed, Judith Marie still had the power to support her son, whether physically or spiritually. And Keenan thanks her for saving his life in the song’s closing lines: “Didn’t have a life, / But surely saved one. / See? I’m alright / Now it’s time for us to let you go.” When connected with the theme of the album – fight to live (Eliezer) – it is clear that his mother’s strong will and unbroken faith inspired Keenan as well as helped him significantly when the singer needed it. This also definitely led the singer to call her an angel in the song. To put it differently, Keenan makes sure that his mother is aware of the admiration he feels towards her as well as he affirms her that the prolonged stay has been rewarding – Keenan has been inspired by her faith and strong will, thus saved.

The song “10,000 Days (Wings Pt 2)” then deals with Judith Marie’s life and death as a believer. Keenan’s disdain for the Church he grew up in is still obvious, especially when he compares the Church to his mother:

Ignorant siblings in the congregation
Gather around spewing sympathy,
Spare me.
None of them can even hold a candle up to you.

However, Keenan makes sure that the song is not about religion in general, but about his mother: “But, enough about the collective Judas.” After that the singer implies that not only he was saved and inspired by his mother’s faith, but he had gained something from this experience as well: “And this little light of mine, a gift you passed on to me.” Then he reveals the true admiration he has for Judith Marie’s unwavering faith:

You’re the only one who can hold your head up high,

Shake your fists at the gates saying:
“I’ve come home now!
Fetch me the Spirit, the Son, and the Father.
Tell them their Pillar of Faith has ascended.”

This is then succeeded by what Keenan deems his mother deserves – “give me my wings.” In other words, her unconditional faith deserves to be rewarded. Judith Marie’s ordeal lead Keenan to compare her with saints: “You are the light and way that they will only read about.” And what follows next appears to be an admission that Keenan has partly rediscovered faith through the life of his mother:

Should you see your Maker’s face tonight,
Look Him in the eye, look Him in the eye, and tell Him:
“I never lived a lie, never took a life, but surely saved one.
Hallelujah, it’s time for you to bring me home.”

These last four lines of the song are preceded by “please forgive this bold suggestion,” which emphasizes Keenan’s approval of his mother’s faith. And the fact that he suggests Judith Marie should be let home, i.e. Heaven, only stresses the possibility of his partly renewed faith (Fidler). The theme of faith and hope is further explored in the song “Jambi,” while “Right in Two” uses Christian imagery:

Angels on the sideline,
Puzzled and amused.
Why did Father give these humans free will?
Now they’re all confused.

While usage of Christian imagery is not uncommon in Keenan’s works, the way they are used only points out that criticism of manipulation, not religion, is the main theme of the singer’s religious songs. Adding the spiritual concept of *Lateralus* and Keenan’s remark that all religions are the same (“Tool,” *SLUG*), it is clear that the singer is not against religion as a set of beliefs. This is also portrayed by the *Lateralus* booklet: the translucent cover reveals different layers of human body and on the fifth page the word “God” hidden in the brain matter can be seen.

Keenan's at least somewhat renewed faith can be found in the song "Sour Grapes" from the most recent Keenan's work, *"V" is for Vagina* album by Puscifer. While in contrast with "all the introspective, torturous, painfully organized and arranged music that takes years to create and cuts really deep" (Epstein, 1), Puscifer, although light in tone, still offers a continuation to other Keenan's lyrics. "Sour Grapes" shares the same starting point with "Disgustipated"; however, the songs are the complete opposites in their execution. While "Disgustipated" is ridiculing religion in both music and lyrics, "Sour Grapes" is humorous in the way Keenan exaggeratedly mimics a clergyman, but not in its message. The main character, presumably again Reverend Maynard, is visited by an angel and then led to "a heavenly star, a holy virgin." She tells him that "change is what we are," and then continues:

Know, my child,
That there is no devil seeking
To cause guilt nor harm to men.
No evil, save blind faith, ignorance,
And the desire for the unprepared
To blame others for the devastation
Left in the wake of change.

This appears to be Keenan's own version of organized religion, which stresses the importance of no overt relying on authorities as well as the need to change, that is evolve.

This section portrayed the development of Keenan's lyrics dealing with religion and faith. Keenan at first concentrated on dogmatism and manipulation, which were the aspects of faith he perceived first. Then he focused on passivity often found in believers, who wait to be delivered, only to end by writing lyrics about the power of unconditional faith. The emotional depth and authenticity of these songs cannot be questioned. The author provides firsthand perception of organized religion and faith, which are insightful as well as emotionally deep and honest. And while considered by some as opposed to religion, it is apparent that Keenan only criticizes the aspects of religion he considers flawed.

Conclusion

As this thesis shows, Keenan's lyrics have a unifying message. Maynard James Keenan has always been interested in progress and change, both on personal and social level. Whether dealing with manipulation or child abuse, personal growth or faith, the singer is not afraid to discuss topics which he finds important in order to "move on." His songs, while sometimes seemingly dark, deal with the improvement of individual as well as humanity itself. To put it simply, Keenan is a truly humanitarian artist, not afraid of reacting to delicate issues. However, he does not preach his messages. The singer lets his own listeners to think for themselves, analyze the lyrics and finally come to their own conclusion. In this way, his audience unknowingly embraces the "Think for yourself" philosophy present in Keenan's work; as this essay shows, this indirect way of reference is an effective one.

Keenan's upbringing and education are probably one of the reasons for the singer's various motifs centered on the theme of evolution; Keenan's life combines religious upbringing with military discipline and arts education. These parts of Keenan's "tripartite" personality seem to complement one another, thus balancing the singer's views. This upbringing appears to be a manifestation of the emotional, mental and physical body concept of "Lateralus" (Gulka) as well as it seems to reflect the concept of the 1927 silent science fiction movie *Metropolis*. The movie, focusing on the relationship between workers and owners in a capitalist society, ends by pointing out that an emotional "Mediator" (the "heart" in the movie) is needed when a connection between body (the "hands") and reason (the "head") is about to happen. In other words, Keenan's lyrics, whether moralizing the contemporary society or dealing with the singer's innermost feelings, reflect the singer's effort for balance and objectivity.

Today, the singer has become an important cultural icon. Throughout his long career, Keenan received growing attention due to his singing abilities as well as his lyrics, selling out arenas and garnering praise from fans and critics alike. Although the singer sometimes uses controversial metaphors and taboo words, he only expresses themes common in American mainstream music in a different way. Artists such as Bruce Springsteen or Joni Mitchell, whom Keenan lists as influential on his work (Dolan), deal in their songs with the same theme of evolution and change. In this way, Keenan continues the tradition of mainstream American music and can be safely listed among the aforementioned artists. However, Keenan denies this cult status, for he says the following: “I can’t be a legend yet. I’m not dead” (Loder).

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Appendix

Compact Disc

Track List:

1. "Prison Sex"
2. "Sober"
3. "Schism"
4. "Imagine"
5. "Third Eye"
6. "Forty-Six & 2"
7. "Magdalena"
8. "Lateralus"
9. "Judith"
10. "10,000 Days (Wings Pt 2)"
11. "Sour Grapes"